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RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1473  
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RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0168  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0738  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1103  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1531  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 3927  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1300  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 1956  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC//DHO-7//  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1694  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK//DOOC/ECMO/CC/DAO/DOB/DOI//  
RUEPGBA/CDR USEUCOM INTEL VAIHINGEN GE//ECJ23-CH/ECJ5M//

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000123

SIPDIS

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AF/S FOR S. HILL  
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN  
USAID FOR M. COPSON AND E. LOKEN  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: POLICE ARREST SCORES OF WOMEN AND STUDENTS TO  
THWART PROTESTS

11. (U) Summary. Police in Harare and Bulawayo on February 13 arrested more than 250 participants in peaceful demonstrations staged by Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) to protest the country's worsening political and economic crisis. An estimated 2,000 WOZA supporters participated in the group's annual Valentine's Day Campaign in the two cities; WOZA reported that it was their largest demonstrations to date. Police used tear gas to disperse marchers in Harare and reportedly assaulted several marchers while breaking up the demonstration in Bulawayo. On the same day, Harare police also arrested 50 students participating in a Zimbabwe National Student's Union (ZINASU) meeting to discuss skyrocketing tuition fees. The strong response by police comes in the wake of ongoing and looming labor actions across key sectors. End Summary.

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WOZA Delivers Valentine's Message A Day Early  
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12. (U) In Harare, the WOZA march with about 1,000 participants started in front of the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) offices where earlier that morning WOZA leaders had delivered a copy of its "People's Charter" to UN representatives asking for support in pressuring the government for social justice. The march continued to Parliament where police in riot gear met the group with tear gas.

13. (SBU) WOZA National Coordinator Jenni Williams told poloff that despite 15 minutes of singing slogans and dancing, the group dispersed on its own. A small number of WOZA

supporters continued on toward ZANU-PF headquarters, but decided to stop when approached by police with dogs. During the course of the march, police arrested eight women. Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) lawyer Otto Saki told us they were released the following day after paying admission of guilt fines.

¶4. (U) The WOZA demonstration in Bulawayo also involved roughly 1,000 marchers. However, it met with a much harsher response. Williams told us police arrested 274 marchers and heavily assaulted several individuals while breaking up the demonstration. The authorities appeared more prepared in Bulawayo. A large number of police were present from the start of the march and toward its conclusion riot police swooped in and brutally beat up a number of the marchers. Saki told us that ZLHR lawyers had managed to contact 83 persons in police custody and that charges were still pending against those detained.

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Students Protest Hike In Tuition Fees  
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¶5. (U) On the same day as the WOZA marches, Harare police also arrested 50 students at Harare Polytechnical College for participating in a meeting to discuss tuition fees that were increased in some instances by 2,000 percent to Z\$560,000 (about US\$110 using the parallel exchange rate) at State universities for the 2007 first semester.

¶6. (SBU) According to press reports, ZINASU representatives claimed that approximately 80,000 of the 250,000 university and college students throughout the country have dropped-out

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over the past year as a result of the unaffordable fees. Saki told poloff that police had released all but 12 of the ZINASU leaders, who had been charged under the Crimes against Public Order Act for unlawful assembly and disorderly conduct. He added that police intelligence officials were interviewing the student leaders.

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Comment  
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¶7. (U) The strong response by police occurs in a charged atmosphere of ongoing and looming labor actions in key sectors. Junior doctors have been out on strike over poor wages since December and medical care at State hospitals has suffered immensely. Additionally, some teachers at secondary schools are participating in a "go-slow" action, university lecturers are threatening to strike and university students are planning protests. There also are widespread rumors that other civil servants may call for a stay-away and that junior police and military officers are grumbling about walking off the job rather than accept paupers' wages.

¶8. (U) In a move to take advantage of this building momentum, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) has announced February 23 as the deadline for the government to improve working and living conditions or risk more industrial actions. ZCTU has been relatively inactive of late, however, and it remains unclear if labor and civil society can pull off effective and coordinated labor actions and keep the momentum going. But the harsh police response in Harare and Bulawayo demonstrates how concerned the government is by the demonstrations\*and by the increasing number of participants.  
SCHULTZ